



# ***TASK FORCE LIBERTY***

## ***Press Release***

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**FORWARD OPERATING BASE DANGER, TIKRIT, Iraq.** Soldiers in Task Force Liberty continue to make a difference in Iraq. As the Iraqi Transitional National Assembly met in Baghdad, members of the Iraqi Security Forces strengthened their partnership with Task Force Liberty Soldiers.

The support provided to Iraqi Police and Army forces continue to provide results across North Central Iraq. The momentum of the emerging democratic government in Iraq is spreading through the people in Kirkuk, As Sulayminayah, Diyala and Salah Ad Din Provinces. The people of Iraq every day see the growing capabilities of their own security forces. The great success of the Iraqi Police and Army forces continues to grow and gain irreversible momentum for the future security and prosperity of North Central Iraq.

### **Breaking the Cycle of Violence**

In the last two weeks, operations in the Task Force Liberty area resulted in an estimated 325 Anti-Iraqi forces detained, eight killed and nine wounded. Significant ammunition seized include 926 rocket, mortar, and artillery rounds, 20 hand grenades and 50 pounds of explosives. Major equipment captured included four heavy machine guns, one anti-aircraft missile, 14 anti-personnel mines, 216 anti-tank mines, 175 small arms, 20 rocket propelled grenade (RPG) launchers with 150 rounds, 104 RPG boosters, and one suicide bomber vest.

Within the Division's area of responsibility, 44 improvised explosive devices were discovered prior to detonation, preventing the needless loss of life at the hands of Anti-Iraqi forces.

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### **Iraqi Forces Move Toward Independent Operations**

Soldiers in the Iraqi Army's 32<sup>nd</sup> Brigade and 204<sup>th</sup> Battalion continue to sharpen their skills and build the confidence of the Iraqi people. On March 23, Iraqi soldiers conducted an independent cordon and search of a home near Buhriz in Diyala Province.

The raid netted two detainees and instructional material on employing rocket propelled grenades. Following an extensive search of the site, improvised explosive device materials, including a 100 foot roll of communications wire, an electrical cylinder with batteries and an AC charger were confiscated.

Following this independent combat actions by the Iraqi Security Forces, the suspected IED manufacturers were turned over to coalition forces, removing another threat in North Central Iraq.

On March 22<sup>nd</sup>, in the southwestern corner of Salah Ad Din Province, members of the Iraqi Ministry of Interior Police Commandos conducted a raid on a terrorist training camp. Assisted by elements of the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade Combat Team and the 42<sup>nd</sup> Aviation Brigade, the Iraqi Police Officers were able to overcome a well-defended insurgent site and remove a safe haven for those planning and preparing to unleash violence in North Central Iraq.

### **Iraqi Government Processes Continue**

While progress continues forward for the emerging Iraqi Transitional Government in Baghdad, local governments have already begun to implement their local control through a democratic process.

Following the great success of the Jan. 30<sup>th</sup> elections, local provinces moved forward with their own local elections. On March 17, the Salah Ad Din Provincial Council held their first meeting in Tikrit. The Provincial Council, including 10 women and members of multiple tribes and ethnicities, appointed its leadership and voted for Hamed Hamood to serve as their Provincial Governor.

On March 20, the first freely elected Mayor in 30 years was installed in the City of Bayji in Salah Ad Din Province. The Bayji City Council voted to appoint Hussein Ahmed Majhoob the Mayor of Bayji.

History was made on March 24 in Diyala Province at the Provincial Government Building, otherwise known as the "Blue Dome," in Baquba, Iraq. In a formal ceremony,

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Ra'ad Hameed Juwad assumed duties as Governor of the Diyala Province. Abdullah Rasheed Hassan peacefully stepped down from his position as appointed Governor, a position he has held for nearly two years. The ceremony marked the first ever democratic and peaceful transition of power in the Diyala Province.

**1<sup>st</sup> Brigade Combat Team (Raider).** Raider Soldiers continue to expand their partnership with Iraqi Security Forces, bringing security to the people of North Central Iraq.

The Bushmasters of Co. B, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment on March 11<sup>th</sup> discovered two local citizens who had been guarding the Tadamun Primary school in Bayji for the last 3 months on their own accord. They indicated they did not want the insurgents to damage the school in their neighborhood before the elections and decided to continue providing security after the elections since it deterred criminals. Doing the job without pay or recognition, they feel that as good citizens they have a duty to help where they can.

On March 12<sup>th</sup> Task Force 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 103<sup>rd</sup> Armor announced that the Farmer's Union Building in Bayji will receive a much needed facelift in the next 90 days. The building serves as a critical commercial hub for the local farmers to have their products distributed throughout Salah Ad Din province. The building suffered from years of neglect under the previous regime. The project will employ approximately 10 people from the local area.

A concerned citizen informed the Iraqi Army that insurgents were storing weapons on a farm in Owja, Iraq on March 12th. The Iraqi Army and Co. C, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry went out to the site. They detained a suspect who, after being questioned by the Iraqi soldiers, led them to an area of the farm. There they uncovered what turned out to be a large number of Rocket Propelled Grenades, mortars, grenades, rifles, and ammunition.

As of March 20<sup>th</sup> the Samarra Police are providing security for the Golden Mosque and surrounding shopping areas adjacent to the religious site. More than 30 police patrol among numerous shoppers and citizens visiting the Golden Mosque. As a result

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of the increased security there has been a marked increase of friendly activity throughout the city, especially the shopping and industrial areas. The Samarra police presence within the city continues to increase.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade Combat Team (Sledgehammer).** The battalion task forces in the “Sledgehammer” Brigade Combat Team continue their work to bring peace and stability to Diyala Province.

The 203<sup>rd</sup> Forward Support Battalion (FSB) deployed custom made up-armor troop transport vehicles for safer troop transport. The up-armored truck is part of a detailed Combat Logistics Patrol to ensure safe transport of our nation’s most precious cargo....our Soldiers.

The 203rd FSB conducted Operation Lightning Eagle, a Reconnaissance and Information mission around Forward Operating Base (FOB) Warhorse on 19 March. Two major tribes in the area were concerned about irrigation water that was cut off when a nearby culvert collapsed. Soldiers informed local citizens of the pending culvert repair and irrigation water will soon flow again. The mission was completed when Soldiers delivered toys and clothes to the local children.

On Forward Operating Base Gabe, the 2-34<sup>th</sup> Armor Battalion conducted a Joint Training Skills Course. This course teaches Iraqi Army (IA) and Iraqi Police (IP) combat and peacekeeping skills. Iraqi Security Forces in Diyala are demonstrating increased responsibility and continued resolve to defeat insurgent forces and secure the peace.

In the Task Force 2-69<sup>th</sup> Armor area, Soldiers are working closely with the local population. Members of 1st platoon, Company D, 2-69<sup>th</sup> Armor and Maj. Sean Hood, the Civil Affairs Team leader, recently delivered supplies to the Khalis Hospital. As the region becomes increasingly more secure, additional supplies are arriving daily and the Khalis Hospital is able to provide better medical care.

Near Muqdadaya, Task Force 1-30<sup>th</sup> Infantry works closely with the Iraqi Army and the Police every day. The task force conducted a number of joint operations with the Iraqi Army’s 205<sup>th</sup> Battalion. Together, the soldiers captured over a dozen suspected terrorists and criminals.

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On March 16, the 213th Iraqi Army Battalion, along with TF 1-10<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Soldiers conducted a joint patrol in the Tahrir area near Baqubah and seized illegal weapons. The patrol demonstrated to the citizens that both the Iraqi Army and Coalition Forces are concerned about the public's well-being and safety.

**116<sup>th</sup> Brigade Combat Team (Warrior).** During the past two weeks Soldiers of the 116th Brigade Combat Team have continued supporting Iraqis in their fight against acts of terrorism and Iraqi efforts to form their new democratic government.

The provinces of Kirkuk and Sulaymaniyah continue to be viewed as a model for overcoming ethnic, religious and political differences in favor of the new democratic Iraq. The 116th continues actively providing support in helping move forward the Iraqi security, economic, government and communications efforts in these provinces.

The last two weeks have seen ongoing progress in the training and operations of Iraqi security forces in the region. The graduation of Iraqi non-commissioned officers from the primary leadership development course (PLDC) last week is a strong indicator that the Iraqi Army is developing into a sustainable and potent force. The 116th BCT's Task Force 1-148 Field Artillery has been training and certifying soldiers of the Iraqi Army on squad-level tasks, vehicle and personnel searches, and other basic soldier skills. They have trained the Iraqi Border Patrol on live fire and medical skills and conducted training with the Iraqi Police Services. TF 1-163 Infantry has been helping prepare the Iraqi oil security battalions in their area with training and equipment. TF 2-116 Armor trained the Iraqi Army on patrol security. TF 3-116 Armor is overseeing the construction of a new Iraqi Army barracks to accommodate the ever-growing numbers of Iraqi recruits.

The investment in training, facilities and equipment is continuing to provide an effective anti-terrorism campaign spearheaded by Iraqi security forces. The Iraqi security forces have repeatedly stopped and defused numerous explosive devices, detained suspected insurgents, conducted raids and manned security checkpoints.

Signs of economic recovery in the region were evidenced by new home construction, school renovations, infrastructure improvements, business center activity, community beautification projects, job creation and medical care improvements. Over the past two

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weeks, TF 2-116 Armor, TF 3-116 Armor and TF 1-148 Field Artillery each reported construction of homes, schools and border forts respectively in their areas. TF 3-116 Armor spearheaded efforts to get well repairs approved for Mansheed Al Assi in Kirkuk Province. Soldiers from the 358th Civil Affairs Brigade facilitated programs at the Kirkuk Business Center and reported the beginning of a city beautification project for Kirkuk. The 145 Support Battalion reported that local Iraqis are working in critical jobs on FOB Warrior, allowing Soldiers to focus on Soldier tasks. The Iraqis are being paid a respectable wage to help support the local economy. TF 1-163 and the 145 Support Battalion's medical personnel conducted a medical assistance visit to the community of Saadonia, assessing medical needs and providing immediate care.

The 116th BCT's leadership continues to support the provincial councils of Kirkuk and Sulaymaniyah as they meet to discuss issues. The 116th BCT's commanders, including Brig. Gen. Alan Gayhart and battalion task force commanders, continued to have one-on-one meetings with representatives from the area's various ethnic and political groups. Meetings focus on security, economic and reconstruction issues.

Media relations and public information remain a priority for 116th BCT leadership. Brig. Gen. Gayhart hosted 11 local media representatives for a joint press conference at Forward Operating Base Warrior with the 506th Air Expeditionary Group Commander Air Force Col. Mark Johnson. The Kirkuk Provincial Council hosted a press conference in which members of the council appeared on Kirkuk local TV shows. Local Iraqi Media Network broadcasters also experimented with a new "Iraqi Justice" format on their live TV talk show the past week.

**278<sup>th</sup> Regimental Combat Team (The Volunteers).** The 278<sup>th</sup> Regimental Combat Team (RCT) continues full-spectrum joint operations with the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) against anti-Iraqi forces and illegal activity. The 278<sup>th</sup> RCT is committed to training and supporting the ISF as they battle the enemies of freedom and democracy.

On March 14, 2005, 3<sup>rd</sup> Squadron, 278<sup>th</sup> RCT provided medical training for 32 Iraqi Army soldiers from the 206<sup>th</sup> Iraqi Army Battalion. The medical trainers provided basic first aid and trauma assessment classes. This training helped strengthen the

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partnership between the Iraqi Army and Coalition Forces and will increase the confidence of the Iraqi Army as they provide security to the local populace.

The 278<sup>th</sup> RCT is also training and preparing the Iraqi Police to better react and handle crisis situations. From March 15-18, Soldiers from Alpha Section, 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon, L Troop, 3<sup>rd</sup> Squadron conducted training for police officers in Jalula and Sadiyah to help them establish special response teams for their departments. This was the first of two training sessions. The training will culminate with a raid being conducted by the Iraqi Police in each of the cities.

The 278<sup>th</sup> RCT is also encouraging the Iraqi Police to cooperate with and take ownership of their communities. On March 20, Soldiers from 1<sup>st</sup> Squadron and Iraqi policemen from Balad Ruz, Iraq handed out school supplies that had been donated by families and churches in the United States, to children at a pre-school and primary school in the city. In addition, Soldiers from the 386<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion provided classes on how to safely avoid unexploded ordinance to students at each school.

Finally, the 278<sup>th</sup> RCT continues to cooperate with Iraqi citizens as they work to keep their cities and families safe. Acting on a citizen's tip, Team Eliminator, 2<sup>nd</sup> Squadron, rolled into Zangilbana on March 23. The tip led the quick reaction force to a home where a 1990 Oldsmobile was located with roadside bomb making materials. Further investigation turned up radio triggers and a 120mm illumination round as well as three electric blasting caps. Various other material was found to include Iraqi Army ammunition, uniforms and boots.

**42<sup>nd</sup> Aviation Brigade (Eagle).** Task Force Eagle continues to soar as it continues improving its operational posture in support of the ground units throughout the 42<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division's area of operations. In addition to the routine reconnaissance, battlefield circulation, and escort missions, highlights over the past two weeks for the Aviation Brigade include transporting many visiting dignitaries, working with the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade Combat Team in support of Operation River Street in Samarra, and an unexpected engagement around Lake Thar Thar which destroyed a suspected terrorist training camp.

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Throughout Task Force Liberty's area of operation, lethal firepower is represented by the Apaches and Kiowa Warriors of the Aviation Brigade. Flying over 1,400 hours this period, the ability of these assets to see a threat and bring overwhelming firepower to eliminate that threat has been exceptional. Working closely with the Brigade Combat Teams, the 8-229<sup>th</sup> Attack Helicopter Battalion and the 1-17<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Squadron assisted the Raiders in supporting Operation River Street on the islands of the Tigris River.

The 1-150<sup>th</sup> Aviation Regiment based in New Jersey and the 1-140<sup>th</sup> based in California, have flown more than 840 hours during this period. In the continued efforts to assist the Iraqi Army with defeating insurgent forces, both lift units and the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, conducted an air assault mission as part of Operation River Street along the Tigris. The swift mobility helped to assure the success during the first phase of this operation.

The 642<sup>nd</sup> Division Aviation Support Battalion, as always, continues to work around the clock to maintain the brigade's aircraft that are operating at an exceptionally high operational tempo in North Central Iraq. The team of maintenance personnel in Company A made great strides in keeping the aircraft flyable in this harsh environment.

**Division Artillery (Thunder).** Division artillery (Divarty) received its combat patch in a ceremony at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Summerall on March 17. The Soldiers of the field artillery worked hard for this recognition. Maj. Gen. Joseph Taluto, the Task Force Liberty Commander attended and awarded the combat patch personally to Colonel Chip Dever on behalf of the Soldiers of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Division Field Artillery. Also present was Brig. Gen. Gary Pappas, the Massachusetts Army National Guard Commander. Some of the Divarty Soldiers have been in theater since October 25, 2004.

Divarty's current battle rhythm includes weekly ground-assault convoys to help sustain combat operations. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 13<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery continues to refine their force protection skills and employment of the Multiple Launch Rocket System. The 272<sup>nd</sup> Chemical Company protects the division from a chemical or biological attack. Divarty is

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ensuring FOB Summerall's force protection measures and life support systems are operational.

**Division Engineers (Detonator).** Division Engineers continue their efforts ensuring the supply routes in the 42<sup>nd</sup> Division area of operations are safe from improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Soldiers from Task Force Trailblazer, the 467<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion, were out daily in advance of corps and division Combat Logistics Patrols to identify and destroy IEDs placed by the criminals and terrorists in Iraq.

A new arrival in theater, the 4<sup>th</sup> Platoon, 365<sup>th</sup> Engineer Detachment (Utility) conducted its Relief in Place with the 854<sup>th</sup> Engineer Detachment at Forward Operating Base Warrior. Since their transfer of authority, engineer Soldiers of the 4/365th have engaged in force protection and quality of life improvements for the 116<sup>th</sup> Brigade Combat Team. Meanwhile, the 793<sup>rd</sup> Engineer Detachment continues to repair and make improvements at Forward Operating Bases Danger and Summerall, and Patrol Bases Razor and Uvanni.

**Division Support Command (Muleskinner).** Division Support Command (DISCOM) continues to provide logistical support to Task Force Liberty in all types of supplies and conducted more than 250 Combat Logistical Patrols to move these supplies over the past two weeks.

In order to improve the combat readiness of the task force, DISCOM Soldiers moved pallets of critical supplies and repair parts from a logistics hub in Balad to Tikrit. The DISCOM Support Operations (SPO) section regularly utilizes Air Force C-17s and Army Aviation logistics flights to move these high value repair parts to the units in the field.

As part of the DISCOM mission to improve the protection available to our task force Soldiers, the 50<sup>th</sup> Main Support Battalion moved 66 concrete barriers to a Patrol Base in the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade Combat Team area and received almost two dozen new M1114 uparmored Humvees for issue to the Soldiers in the field.

DISCOM continues to focus on transitioning the security mission to the Iraqi Army and Police. Soldiers in Task Force Liberty DISCOM continue to store and issue supplies, ammunition and vehicles for the Iraqi Security Forces. Distribution of individual

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equipment and uniforms were shipped to the Iraqi Army brigades. This work included the receipt and maintenance preparation of ambulances, water trucks, fuel and cargo trucks. During this period, an IL-76 Russian cargo plane landed at Forward Operating Base Speicher where DISCOM Soldiers off-loaded more than 40 tons of equipment for the Iraqi Security Forces.

The Division Ammunition Section issued the combat brigades more than 100 thousands rounds of ammunition to support combat operations in the Iraqi Army.

The 42<sup>nd</sup> DISCOM and 50<sup>th</sup> Main Support Battalion held their combat patch ceremonies on March 17<sup>th</sup> to recognize the Soldiers for their achievements wartime.

The DISCOM continues to work towards successfully supporting all operations in our area of operations and strives to enhance the well-being of Task Force Liberty Soldiers across North Central Iraq.

## **Conclusion**

Task Force Liberty and our Iraqi Security Force partners continue to help provide a safe and secure Iraq. The seating of the Iraqi Transitional Government and the beginning of Iraq's new constitution mark the progress of the Iraqi people in securing their future.

We continue to work with the Iraqi Security Forces to neutralize the insurgency. We will continue to help train, coach and support the Iraqi Interim Government and the Iraqi Security Forces so that they can improve the quality of life for their people. We believe in the future of Iraq. To our families, friends, employers and the American people, Task Force Liberty thanks you for your steadfast support and encouragement.

***Never Forget!***

**For more information on the 42<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division and Task Force Liberty:**

**[www.42id.army.mil](http://www.42id.army.mil)**

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